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Display Building Number II
Brandon

Introduction

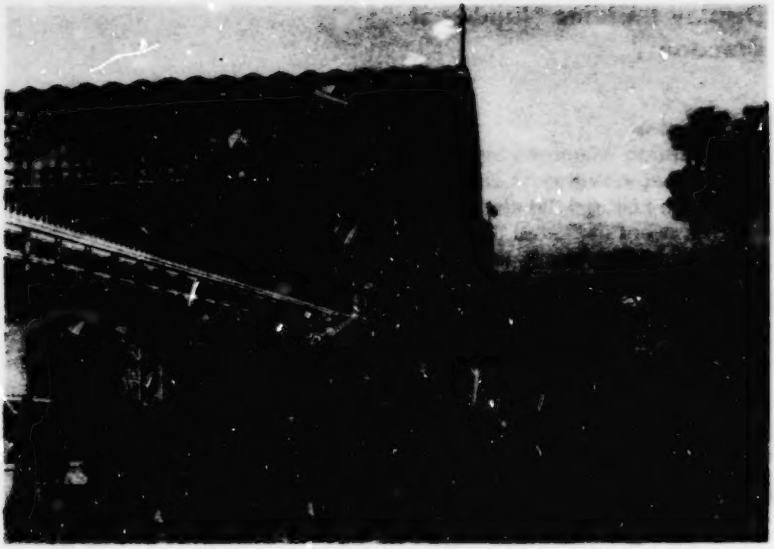
Brandon, Manitoba has been one of the foremost agricultural exhibition centres in Western Canada ever since its settlement in 1882. The 1913 Dominion Fair and the elaborate Display Building Number II constructed for that event indicated Brandon's ability to successfully host a national agricultural exhibition in Canada. The Display Building, designed by Walter H. Shillinglaw and David Marshall, two prominent Brandon architects, was constructed in 1913 to promote agricultural and manufacturing developments from across the country. The structure is the last remaining vestige of the Dominion Fair — a rare, surviving example of grand agricultural display buildings erected throughout Manitoba. This building is indicative of the Beaux-Arts Classical style of architecture popular for monumental buildings around the turn of the century. Now owned by the Keystone Agricultural and Recreational Centre Incorporated, the building is operated under the auspices of The Provincial Exhibition of Manitoba. The Display Building Number II has remained in continuous use since 1913 and has recently undergone a series of renovations to upgrade the facility. In 1984 the Display Building Number II was designated by the Province of Manitoba as an historic site.

Exhibition Buildings

The Display Building Number II was a product of an architectural evolution among display buildings which stretched back more than half a century and across the Atlantic Ocean. Prior to 1851 the concept of a permanent building specifically erected for exhibition purposes was unknown. Though earlier expositions ranged back as early as 1797, they had been housed in tents or other temporary structures, or had been held in large buildings, devoted to other uses. These had been situated chiefly in France, then considered the global cultural capital.

In 1851, Joseph Paxton, a British engineer, designed a permanent structure for the International Exhibition in London, England. The structure was palatial in size and grandeur, but it used glass as its sheathing material and cast iron members in its superstructure. The huge glass building was aptly named the Crystal Palace, and so successful was the concept that it was copied in numerous other structures elsewhere in England and on the Continent. Paramount in the designs was a huge, arcaded main hall, executed in glass, usually two storeys in height. Another characteristic of these buildings was the large, semi-circular roofs culminating in half-round gable ends.

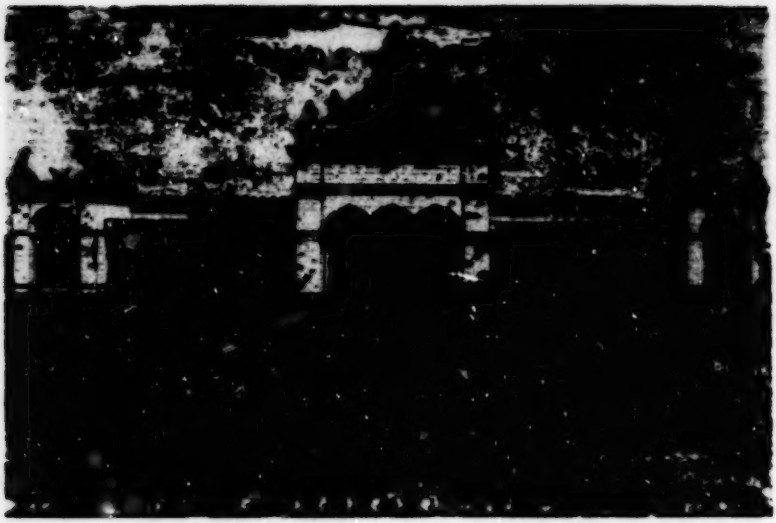
There were, of course, variations on the basic principles. In Paris, where the International Exhibition of 1862 was held, Paxton's use of glass as the covering was reiterated, but the building was concealed behind a facade that boasted Second Empire architectural styling with a mansarded pavilion roof.



The Crystal Palace, International Exhibition, London, 1851

These developments in Europe were soon felt in North America. The 1876 Centennial Exposition held in Philadelphia influenced the course of the architectural development of display buildings. The small display buildings in Philadelphia were clothed in diverse decorative elements that could, fairly easily, be reproduced with wood and brick instead of cast iron, glass and stone. Cheaply-constructed wood and brick buildings, with a rich, dignified appearance were now affordable at the many less prestigious fairs throughout North America. The main exhibition buildings at Ottawa, designed by James Mather for the Provincial Exhibition of 1875, were examples of this trend; the simple frame buildings were adorned with rich ornamentation.

International Exhibition, Paris, 1862.



Centennial Exposition, Philadelphia, 1862

Exhibition Building, Ottawa, 1875

World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1892

The World's Columbian Exhibition of 1892-93 held in Chicago and its sister fair at St. Louis in 1904 both introduced and reinforced the use of Beaux Arts Classical motifs in grandiose display buildings. The monumentality, symmetry and often elaborate detailing of Beaux Arts Classicism made it an eminently suitable style for grand exhibition buildings often executed in plaster or other easily worked yet non-permanent material. Elements such as columns, pilasters, triangular pediments and entablature became common elements on new structures in the years after the Chicago Fair. By the late 1920s the Beaux Arts style was less evident, having been replaced by modified classical elements. The new designs featured only a suggestion of huge porticos and colonades. By the early thirties, these neo-classical features were being fitted around the angular features of Art Deco ornamentation.

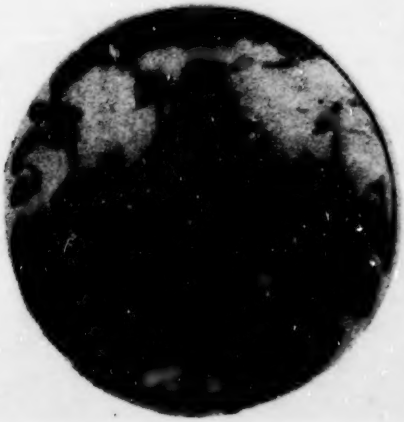
Manitoba Exhibition Buildings

With the rapid settlement of Western Canada there evolved a wide range of agricultural and industrial exhibitions. These fairs, which often attracted hundreds of visitors to view agricultural products, machinery and to partake in the various forms of entertainment, were a favourite summer activity that provided a perfect atmosphere for socializing. Urban centres could support more ambitious and lengthy fairs, while the smaller and more scattered rural communities sponsored less sophisticated, but nonetheless, important agricultural fairs to display the produce so important to Manitoba's economy.

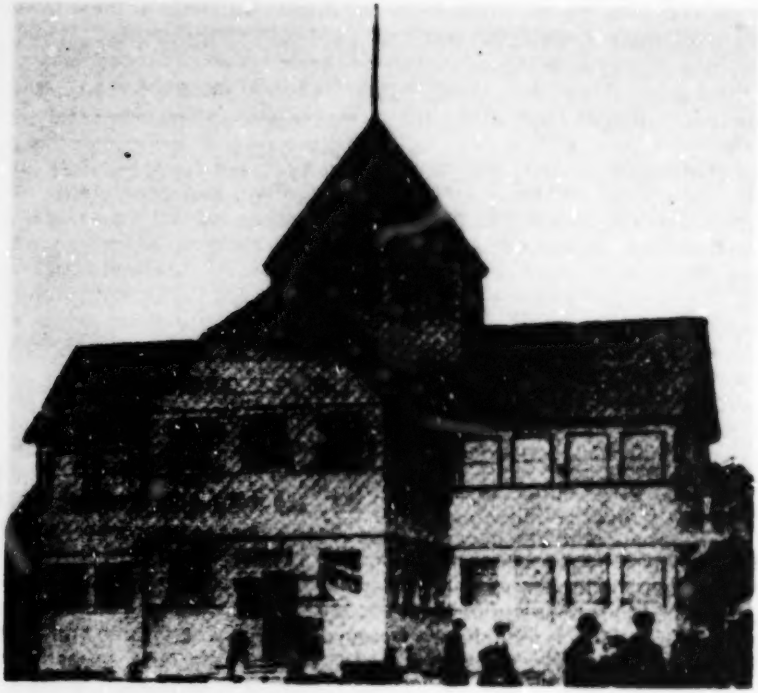
In Manitoba the development of the display buildings at these fairs generally followed trends generated in the major eastern centres. While Manitoba display buildings often copied the more substantial structures of the big fairs, local structures typically had short lifespans, being constructed as simple large shells from the cheapest available material, wood.

The main Provincial Exhibition building erected at St. Boniface in 1885 was a very utilitarian shell; indeed by 1898 it had deteriorated so badly that it was demolished. The City of Winnipeg and the Winnipeg Industrial Exhibition Association erected their own building, a Queen Anne style octagonal structure, in 1891. Designed by Charles Burgess (1833-1925) formerly of the Dominion Department of Public Works, this building received numerous additions. It was by 1893 cruciform in shape and after 1897, a 90 feet x 240 feet rectangular structure with small wings. It was demolished c1920.

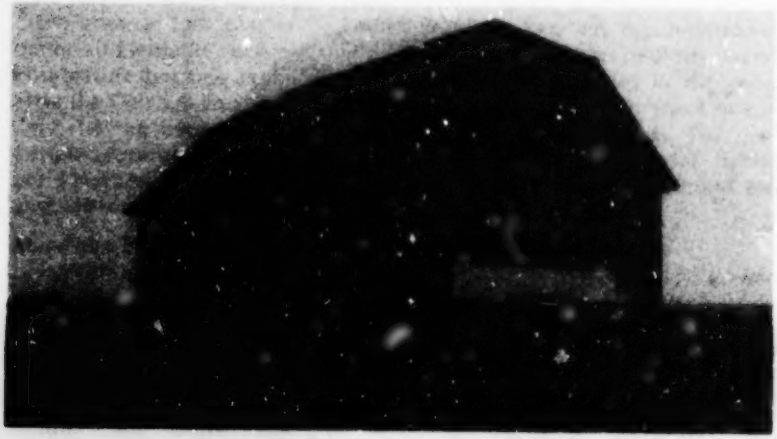
In 1901, Portage la Prairie erected its Agricultural Fair building on Island Park. In terms of display buildings, this structure was similar in design and intent to earlier Manitoban structures. It is no longer extant. Like the Winnipeg structure it was cruciform in shape with an octagonal cupola. Perhaps more typical of moderately-sized community fair display buildings was the 1899 Agricultural Hall at Dauphin. The Dauphin structure, now gone, was of frame construction, was 20 feet x 50 feet and two storeys high with a hipped roof. An extant earlier structure of yet another style, is the Minnedosa Agricultural Society Display Building constructed c1890. The building is a small, two-storey, octagonal wood frame building which is still utilized by the Agricultural Society. Of the agricultural halls that existed in communities throughout Manitoba prior to 1930, the majority were, like the Dauphin and Minnedosa buildings, likely of low cost and vernacular design.



Industrial Exhibition, Winnipeg, 1891.



Agricultural Hall, Portage la Prairie, 1901



Agricultural Hall, Dauphin, 1899.

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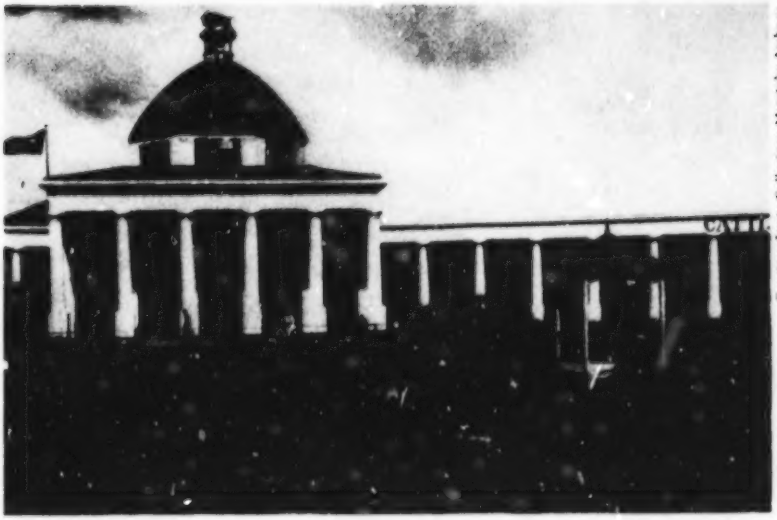
Minnedosa Agricultural Society Display Building constructed 1890

When the 1904 Dominion Fair was granted to Winnipeg, the main display building, then twelve years old, was considered by many to be dated, architecturally. It seemed appropriate that a building befitting Winnipeg's level of sophistication should be erected to impress visitors. As a result, a facade some 1200 feet long was erected as a front to the long sheds and stables of the old building. The "Colonnade", as it was called, cost $10,000, was built of wood frame and stucco, and was designed by an employee of the City Engineer's Department, Wallace Cotman Eade. The Colonnade was a large Doric pavilion with an octagonally-sided dome surmounted by a lantern upon which was placed a buffalo. On either side of this pavilion were long facades bearing columns and entrances to the various buildings.

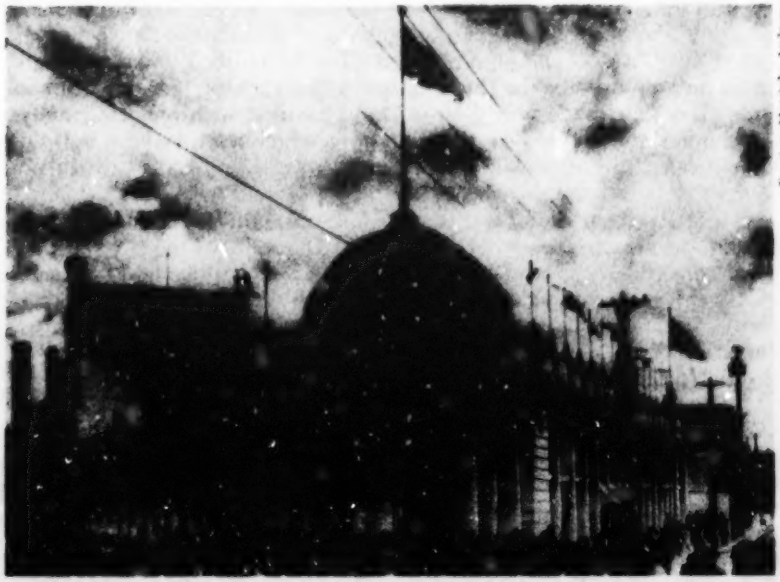
John D. Atchison's Industrial Exposition Hall in Winnipeg did its share to end the hegemony of the Exhibition Grounds as the city's display area. Conceived in 1911 and erected in 1912, this triangular building had a classical facade with very little in the way of decorative or Beaux-Arts elements. Squat cupolae adorned the northern and southern corners with arcaded windows between the rows of Ionic columns. As a display building it was typical; the short-lived shell was demolished in 1935.

The construction of the Winnipeg Civic Auditorium, now the Provincial Archives Building, in 1932, gave Winnipeg its first substantial display building. A "make-work" project of the Depression, the Auditorium was the product of an architectural cooperative meant to spread work among the local offices. Thus, Ralph B. Pratt and Donald A. Ross undertook the structural aspects, while John Semmens designed the exterior, and George W. Northwood and Cyril W. Chivers, the interior. The Civic Auditorium was an Art Deco interpretation of a classically styled building and had large and small auditoria, as well as several smaller display spaces.



Courtesy Foote Collection, Manitoba Archives

The Colonnade, Dominion Fair, Winnipeg, 1904.



Courtesy Manitoba Archives

Industrial Bureau Exhibition Building, Winnipeg, 1912.

The Provincial Exhibition of Manitoba

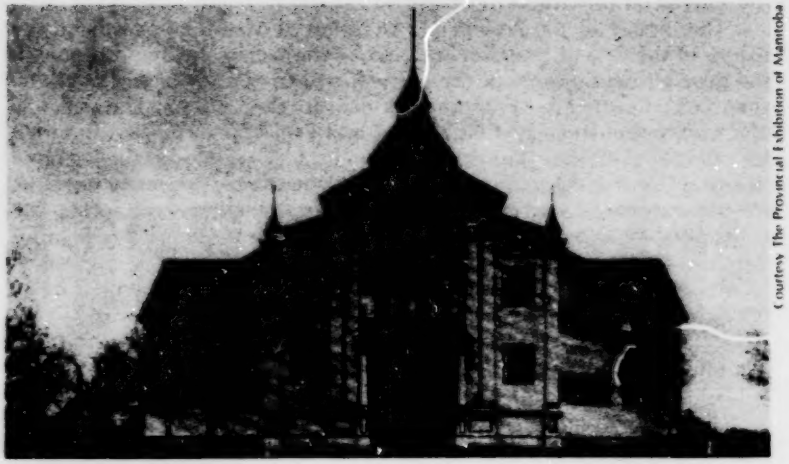
The history of the Provincial Exhibition of Manitoba paralleled the history of the City of Brandon and also confirmed the prosperous growth and development of agriculture in the Province of Manitoba. On 11 October 1882, shortly after Brandon was incorporated as a city, the fledgling community sponsored its first Agricultural Exhibition. The first Brandon Agricultural Exhibition was organized under the auspices of the Brandon Electoral Division Agricultural Society with a membership of 140 people. The Exhibition operated on a $100.00 grant from the Province, and $52.00 in membership fees. It provided $200.00 in prize money for categories that included cattle, horses, pigs, poultry and cereal grains, as well as dairy produce and arts and crafts. *The Brandon Daily Sun*, however, had a rather less than enthusiastic comment on the Exhibition.

> Great posters in red and blue were printed and circulated; the entire countryside was expected, liberal prizes, donations from merchants and others were offered. The place selected was a vacant lot on Princess Avenue in front of an implement warehouse. The day arrived, a few exhibits of farm produce were in view, placed in temporary booths. Half a dozen cattle shivering in the cold did not speak well for the future of the cattle industry in the district. But where was the crowd? Probably 300 persons and each with an umbrella or an overcoat and mittens.

The determination of the Agricultural Society was not dampened by its inauspicious beginnings and the limited response to the Exhibition by residents of Brandon and the surrounding area. Shortly after the Exhibition was over, the Society reorganized and was renamed the Agricultural Society Number I. The Society was determined more than ever to have a large and successful local fair. By utilizing the financial assets of the Society, a donation by the City of Brandon, and a provincial grant of $2,000.00, thirty-five acres of land were purchased to stage the next exhibition to be held in 1883. This land comprises part of the present Brandon Exhibition Grounds. An elaborate exhibition building known as the "Crystal Palace" was constructed in the centre of the Exhibition Grounds. The "Crystal Palace" was a two-storey octagonal building constructed by Arthur T. Timewell and Company, a Brandon architectural firm. Eleven years later this building, along with its partially completed

North West Farmer, August 1884

View of the Brandon Fair Ground with the 1883 Crystal Palace.



Courtesy The Provincial Exhibition of Manitoba

Industrial Building, Brandon Fair Ground, 1904

addition, would be destroyed by a windstorm. Its successor, the "Industrial Building", (also known as Display Building Number I and the "Crystal Palace") designed by Brandon architect W.A. Elliott, was quickly constructed for the Exhibition that was to be held in 1904.

For the second Exhibition, held in 1883, the Agricultural Society Number I greatly expanded the number of categories of cattle and horses to encourage keener competition. Attractive awards were offered to winners, including a set of sleigh bells for the "best walking horse team", a Silver Medal from *The Brandon Sun* for the "best herd of not less than 10 cattle", and, of course, a prize of five dollars offered by the Queen's Hotel of Brandon for the "fattest baby between 5 to 7 months old." An effective advertising campaign and Brandon's reputation as "Manitoba's Wheat City" also contributed to a much-improved reputation for the Exhibition.

The Brandon Agricultural Exhibition of 1883 was officially opened by Manitoba's Lieutenant-Governor, James Cox Aikins. Exhibition entries comprising livestock and agricultural produce totalled almost 1000, including the entry of the now world-famous Red Fyfe wheat. A variety of agricultural and related entries, emphasizing farm produce, horticulture and arts and crafts displays were also elaborately displayed in the "Crystal Palace." The Society's optimism and efforts had, finally, been justly rewarded.

Brandon's position as an exhibition centre was complemented when it became an important distribution point for the importation and exportation of draft horses in Western Canada, and later the home of a new breed of cattle — Aberdeen Angus — bred locally by J.D. McGregor.

McGregor, a founding member of the Brandon Winter Fair and later, Manitoba's Lieutenant-Governor, had won international acclaim at the Chicago World's Fair for his display of Aberdeen Angus cattle.

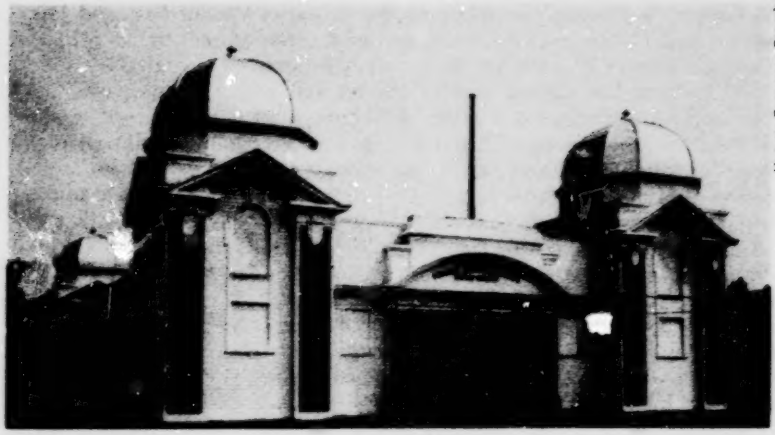
The Brandon Agricultural Exhibition met with ever-increasing success and its reputation as a centre for agricultural pursuits grew steadily. In 1892 the Brandon Agricultural Society applied for incorporation as the Western Agricultural and Arts Association of Manitoba. The new organization obtained its charter in February 1897. By approval of the Manitoba Legislature, the Western Agricultural and Arts Association officially named the Brandon Exhibition Fair, The Provincial Exhibition of Manitoba. Preparations for the 1897 Provincial Exhibition began almost immediately with the purchase of additional land and the construction of suitable display facilities. The exhibition site was landscaped under the direction of H.L. Patmore, a Brandon horticulturalist, who supplied the trees and shrubs from his local nursery. The first Provincial Exhibition of Manitoba was held from 3 to 5 August 1897. The Board of Directors offered five thousand dollars in prizes and resolved to make the exhibition a great force in the agricultural life of Manitoba.

The 1913 Dominion Fair

The first Dominion Fair was organized in 1879 in conjunction with the Provincial Agricultural Association of Ontario. The objective of this fair, held in Ottawa, besides displaying the agricultural and industrial contributions from other provinces, was to improve the conditions, nationally, of agriculture, horticulture, and the household arts in Canada. Alternating its site nearly every year, the Fair became a prestigious event that brought national attention to its host.

The first Dominion Fair held west of Ontario was staged in Winnipeg in 1904 and by 1912 the Western Agricultural and Arts Association in Brandon was so confident of its own ability to host a major Canadian exhibition, it made official application to the Federal Department of Agriculture to stage the 1913 Dominion Fair. The Association contended that its proven financial and organizational ability, the fine reputation of The Provincial Exhibition of Manitoba, and the city's strategic location in Western Canada as a major communication and transportation centre, were positive factors favouring Brandon's selection to host the Fair. While these were persuasive arguments, there were other communities throughout Canada that could also justify an application on similar grounds. To better assure success the Association undertook substantial improvements to the exhibition facilities.

On 11 April 1912, the now-confident Association, headed by President Peter Payne and Secretary William Smale, made its lengthy proposal regarding the Fair to the Honourable Martin Burrell, MP, Minister of Agriculture, during his visit to Winnipeg. In mid-September of 1912 a formal announcement that Brandon was to host the Fair was received by the Association. The 1913 Dominion Fair was to be held in Brandon from 15 to 25 July and would offer the largest prize list that any exhibition had ever issued in Canada for livestock and agricultural products.



Historic Resources Branch

Display Building Number II

During the months between its selection and the Fair's opening day, there was still much to be done in Brandon. Although the Association claimed assets of $10,000 from previous exhibitions, this sum was inadequate to meet the expenses of the 1913 Dominion Fair. Much more capital was required to host the prestigious event. From the Dominion Government came a subsidy of $25,000 for hosting the Fair. The Provincial Government guaranteed the Exhibition Board a grant of $20,000 and lesser financial contributions were provided by neighbouring municipalities. The City of Brandon also issued debentures to a maximum of $50,000 for financial support toward the Fair. The Association then proceeded to appoint nine special committees to prepare for the Fair. Of particular importance was the appointment of J.S. Gibson as Chairman of the Building and Grounds Committee and the subsequent selection of the prominent Brandon architectural firm of Walter H. Shillinglaw and David Marshall as designers for the exhibition grounds and buildings.

Shillinglaw and Marshall undertook the design of four major structures on the Exhibition Grounds — the Grandstand, Cattle Barn, Poultry Building and Display Building Number II. The firm also supervised the design of the Gate Entrance plus numerous renovations and additions to existing structures. An approximate total of $150,000 was spent on erection of the buildings, remodelling of the grounds and the purchase of an additional eighty acres of land expanding the site to two hundred acres. Frank Lissaman, General Contractor from Brandon, was awarded the contract for supervising the building construction and hiring the labour crew. Thomas Chalmers and Brown and Mitchell, also of Brandon, were awarded the contracts for masonry and the installation of sheet metal. The Rat Portage Lumber Company was responsible for carpentry work on the Exhibition structures.

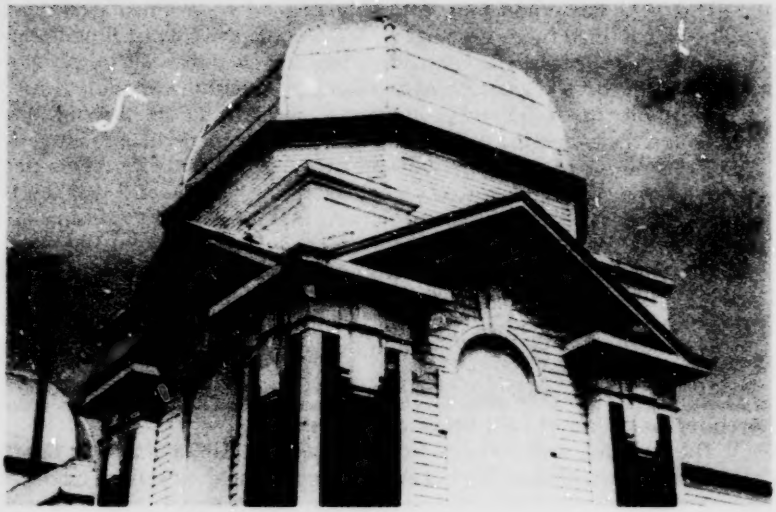
The 1913 Dominion Fair, officially opened by Premier Rodmond Roblin, was termed by its organizers, patrons and the City of Brandon as an unqualified success. The Fair had clearly achieved its basic purpose -- to display advances in agriculture and provide agricultural manufacturers an opportunity to exhibit and promote their products to the farming community and the interested public. Fair attendance reached approximately 20,000 people for a ten day period with a total of $21,000 offered in prize money for livestock and related competitions. An additional $45,000 was allotted for a variety of other attractions including race track and airplane events. Popular Canadian farm journals remarked that the event had not only succeeded the most optimistic hopes of all involved in the Fair, but rivaled, if not surpassed, other similar exhibitions in Canada. Unfortunately, this was the last Dominion Fair ever held. By the time the Great War was over, in 1918, the tradition of an annual Dominion Fair had been forever disrupted.

Architectural Firm of Shillinglaw and Marshall

The Brandon architectural firm of Walter H. Shillinglaw and David Marshall was established in 1910 and, except during their service overseas during World War I, the business continued until the early 1920s. As well as designing the exhibition buildings and gate entrance for the 1913 Dominion Fair, the firm was also responsible for countless commercial buildings and schools in Brandon. Both Shillinglaw and Marshall had private practices, although Marshall's career is not as well documented as Shillinglaw's.

David Marshall was apprenticed to and later worked as chief draughtsman for James Lindsay, a prominent architect of Glasgow, Scotland. He received his further architectural education in the Glasgow School of Art. Marshall arrived in Canada around 1906 coming west from Montreal to Brandon. He was assigned by the architectural firm of Taylor, Hogel and Davis, based in Montreal, to supervise the construction of The Merchants Bank (1907; absorbed by The Bank of Montreal in 1922) latterly the Western Manitoba Regional Library in Brandon. He also designed The Merchants Banks in Carberry, Manitoba and Arcola, Saskatchewan. In 1922 Marshall designed the Brandon Citizen's Science Building which now houses the Drama Department, Brandon University. Marshall's career later took him to Chicago in 1927 and New Zealand in 1951.

In contrast the prolific architectural career of Walter H. Shillinglaw (1864-1957), Civil Engineer, Fellow of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, is well established. Born in Ontario at Staffa, near Stratford, Shillinglaw moved to Brandon with his parents in March of 1882. His father was a builder and together they erected the family home at 302 Russell Street in which the architect was to live all his life. The house is still standing. Father and son collaborated often, as builder and architect respectively, on a number of Brandon's prestigious homes. Villa Louise (1888) at 707 Louise Avenue is one of their finest. Although he did not complete his studies at the School of Science in Toronto, Shillinglaw rose to prominence in his profession, serving as Brandon's City Engineer bet-



Historic Resources Branch

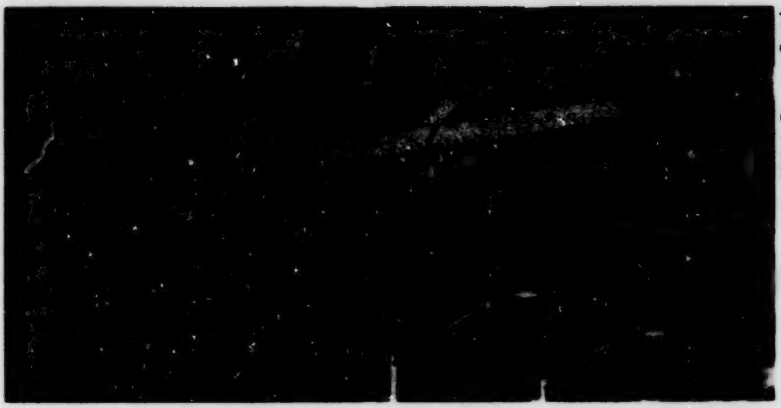
Southwest corner cupola

ween 1896 and 1910. When he was not sorting out the many problems associated with the city's rapid expansion, Shillinglaw was able to design such structures as the 1901 St. Paul's Presbyterian (now Central United) Church. On his return to Brandon from his overseas duty during World War I, commissions for buildings were scarce. By the end of the 1920s, however, Shillinglaw was designing his largest and perhaps finest structures including Earl Haig School (1928), Victoria Avenue East; First Presbyterian Church (1928), Twelfth Street and the Federal Building (1930), Princess Avenue.

Display Building Number II

Of the four major structures erected for the Dominion Fair only the Display Building Number II remains as a reminder of that glorious event. The Grandstand, Cattle Barn and Poultry Building were demolished in the mid-1970s during preliminary negotiations regarding the proposed construction of the Keystone Agricultural and Recreational Centre on the Exhibition Grounds.

The Display Building Number II is, in plan, a rather simple rectangular structure measuring 170 feet long by 80 feet wide constructed for a cost of $12,000. Four corner cupolae animate the one storey building which provided display space for a variety of exhibits including agricultural produce, fish, fruit, timber and samples of work undertaken by Canada's Dominion Experimental Farms. Of wood post and truss construction, there was an emphasis on Beaux Arts Classical motifs for dramatic effect. Pediments, pilasters and consoles created the impression of sophistication.



Historic Resources Branch

Truss detail, interior

Significance

The Display Building Number II is the only building left to recall the 1913 Dominion Fair, the last held in Canada. The Display Building was not only constructed as a utilitarian structure to display Canadian goods and products for the Dominion Fair in 1913, but was also meant to impress visitors with Brandon's wealth and importance. Today it is still a useful building for The Provincial Exhibition of Manitoba, serving a multitude of functions.

For Brandon the Dominion Fair of 1913 marked the culmination of three decades of work at the local level, producing annual fairs. The buildings on the site were a continual reminder of the city's new position within the Dominion. Related as it was, to the city's "Crystal Palace" of 1904 and the Grandstand built in 1913, the Display Building Number II became even more significant because it attracted public attention and became one of the most important buildings on the fair grounds.

Typical exhibition buildings were not intended for constant use nor a long life span and usually served their intended purpose quite well until age, fire or storms ended their careers. The Brandon structure has withstood the fate of similar agricultural buildings and is a reminder of the manner in which grandiose architectural styles were used to clothe otherwise mundane buildings. While the structure has not been altered to any substantial degree and is still structurally sound, it has suffered the removal of many smaller elements which helped to define its character. Recent exterior renovations have restored much of its grandeur.

The Keystone Agricultural and Recreational Centre, officially opened on 2 April 1973, is now the focus of activity on the Brandon Exhibition Grounds. However, the Display Building Number II not only continues to be an important facility for The Provincial Exhibition of Manitoba but is a constant reminder of grand agricultural display buildings once common in the West and the heady days of the 1913 Dominion Fair.

Bibliography For Further Reading

For a general history of settlement in Manitoba that includes information on Brandon, John Langton Tyman's, *By Section, Township and Range — Studies in Prairie Settlement* is a valuable source. For an overview history of Brandon several books are useful including *Brandon: A City* by G.F. Barker and *Brandon — A Prospect of a City* by the Brandon Division Association, Manitoba Teachers' Society, Mary Hume, Editor.

Historical information on the growth of agricultural exhibitions in Western Canada can be found in *Assiniboine Basin* by Martin Kavanagh and *Agriculture on Parade* by Grant MacEwan. Several books are available on the historical and architectural development of exhibition buildings such as *Record of the International Exhibition of 1862* and *Guide to the City of Ottawa and Dominion Exhibition*, both by Robert Mallet, Editor; *History and Description of the Crystal Palace*, John Tallis and Company; and *American Buildings and their Architects — Progressive and Academic Ideals at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* by William H. Jordy.

A number of Manitoba newspapers including the *Brandon Daily Sun*, the *Manitoba Free Press* and the *Winnipeg Telegram* provide historical insight into the events surrounding the 1913 Dominion Fair. Similarily, prairie farm journals including the *Farmer's Advocate*, the *Western Home Monthly* and the *Nor'West Farmer* compliment the information available on the Fair.

Credits

The cover photograph of the Display Building Number II as it looked in July 1913 is printed courtesy of The Provincial Exhibition of Manitoba.

The photograph of the Crystal Palace is reprinted from *History and Description of the Crystal Palace* by John Tallis (London: John Tallis and Company, 1851).

The photograph of the International Exhibition, Paris, 1862 is reprinted from *Record of the International Exhibition of Paris*, edited by Robert Mallet (Glasgow: William Mackenzie, c1863).

The photograph of the Ottawa Exhibition Buildings, 1875 is reprinted from *Guide to the City of Ottawa and Dominion Exhibition*, edited by Robert Mallet (Ottawa: A.S. Woodburn, 1879).

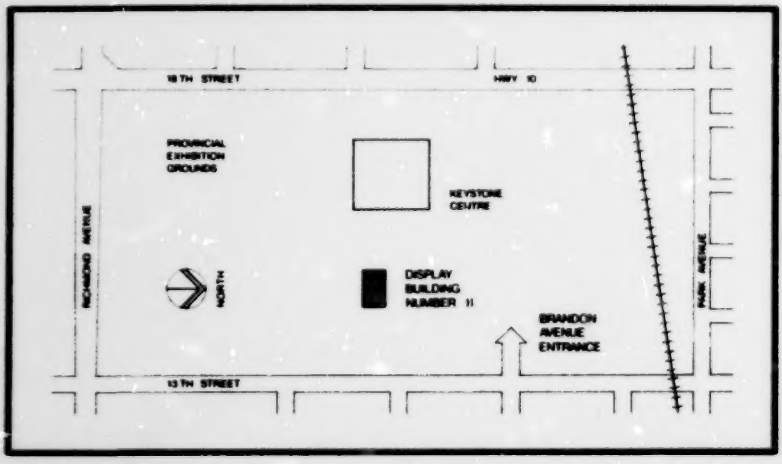
The photograph of the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1892 is reprinted from *A History of the World's Fair; Being a Complete and Authentic Description of the Columbian Exposition from its Inception* (Chicago: no publisher, c1893).

Display Building Number II

Established in 1882, Brandon soon became one of the foremost agricultural exhibition centres in Western Canada. In 1913, the city was the site of the Dominion Fair.

Display Building Number II was constructed in that year to promote agricultural and manufacturing innovations from across Canada. The structure is a rare surviving example of agricultural buildings constructed in Manitoba. It was designed by Walter H. Shillinglaw and David Marshall, two prominent Brandon architects. This building has been used continuously for exhibition purposes for The Provincial Exhibition of Manitoba. It remains a centre for promoting agricultural development in the southwestern area of Manitoba. In scale and composition the building is typical of the Beaux-Arts Classicism style of architecture popular for monumental buildings around the turn of the century.

The Historic Sites Advisory Board of Manitoba



The plaque is located near the northwest corner of the Display Building Number II.